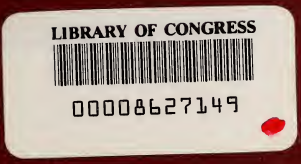
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MIRACLES AND SCIENCE.

BY

EDWARD STRACHEY.

AUTHOR OF "HEBREW POLITICS IN THE TIMES OF SARGON AND SENNACHERIB."

"He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind."—IN MEMORIAM.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to ascertain the results at which a man who holds the Christian Faith is likely to arrive, if he honestly investigates the Miracles of the Bible by the methods of modern Science: and to vindicate the duty, rather than the bare right, of the Free Enquiry and Free Discussion which such an investigation involves.

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MIRACLES AND SCIENCE.

INTRODUCTORY DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

THE AUTHOR AND A FRIEND.

Modern Science and the Bible.— M. Comte's Goddess Humanity. — Christianity or Atheism the real alternative. — The Sphinx and her riddle.—M. Comte's three stages of knowledge: the theological, the metaphysical, the positive.— Scepticism metaphysical, not positive.—Is the Bible a revelation? — The question answered by the positive method. — Mr. Mill's Canon on Miracles. — Burke and Arnold on the Anglo-Saxon Miracles. — No short way to knowledge on this more than on any other subject.

Friend. Do you really think, as you said yesterday, that Christianity and the Bible ought to be investigated, and their truth tested, by the same methods of positive science as we employ in astronomy or chemistry?

Author. Perhaps I said must, not ought.

Do not you philosophers teach us that our business is with necessary and invariable sequences, and that by observation of these in the past and present we may predict the future ones; but that with final causes we have nothing to do?

F. If you are in earnest, you must know and feel too, as I do, that the important point is whether must and ought can go together here. If you, still claiming to be a Christian, hold that your faith may, as well as must, be tested by the methods in question, you hold that it will stand the test: if, on the other hand, you only mean that the process is inevitable, you mean that we have no eventual prospect before us but Atheism.

A. You don't think, then, that when the world has outgrown Christianity as well as Paganism and Judaism, it will advance to a higher faith of Theism, or Pantheism, or Positivism realised in the Worship of the Goddess Humanity?*

* M. Auguste Comte, best known by his *System of Positive Philosophy* translated by Miss Martineau, formally announces himself as the "*Founder of the Religion of Humanity*," in his *Catéchisme Positiviste, Système*

F. I cannot understand how a man can make real progress in the methods of physical science,

de Politique Positive, and other works. The *Catéchisme* (which is well worthy the study of all "positive philosophers") is not a mere philosophical system, but an elaborately detailed scheme for the WORSHIP OF THE GODDESS HUMANITY, who consists of all worthy men and domestic animals (p. 31.) after they have passed through death into the only immortality which "Positivism" recognises, — namely, that of abiding in the minds and hearts of those still alive.

This "New Supreme Being" is finally to supersede the God whom men have hitherto believed in, though "sans oublier jamais ses services provisoires" (p. 382.): and M. Comte sets forth the new Faith and Church of the Goddess at large under the heads of Doctrine, Worship, and Government. The morality of the Doctrine, based on the maxim "*Live for others,*" is indeed most noble. The Worship prescribes nine sacraments (p. 193.); public festivals and liturgies, with appropriate calendars of saints'-days; daily private and family prayers to the Goddess — for the former of which, to be offered up at three stated times, there are ample directions (p. 189.); and for the latter a reference to a collection of prayers already drawn up for every day of the week, by "one of the young brethren" (p. 215.). The Ecclesiastical Government provides a complete hierarchy, from the "High Priest of Humanity who will naturally reside in Paris" (p. 262.), on a salary of 60,000 francs (2400*l.*) besides his expenses, to the lowest class, who will begin with 3000 francs (120*l.*) and without the parsonage house provided for the order above them (p. 260.). The fabric of the churches and the payment of the clergy's salaries (p. 311.)

or in the mental discipline which those methods both demand and produce in its students, and not ere long arrive at the conclusion that all our modern theological "isms" are metaphysical entities with no corresponding realities. It may be a paradox; but I find my own mind urged irresistibly in this direction by physical science, even while I feel that it excites in me a lively sense that there must be a Creator of this wondrous universe.

A. And I may say that all I know of history and society leads me to the like conclusion. Theism is the result of a man having more heart than head, however active the latter may be. A really persistent logic will inevitably bring him to the conclusion that before and within him is what the Bible calls Faith in Christ, or else a sheer blank.

F. You speak as cheerfully as if you had no fear of this sheer blank being your own lot. If such is your confidence, would that you could

will be under the charge of the Bankers, who, as M. Comte's readers know, will hold the chief temporal rule in the Regenerated Republics which before the end of the 19th century are to replace the present European "Anarchy."

give me a share, or rather that you could show me that it is well founded and therefore such as I can get at for myself. Every new step in science, every new proof of the universal applicability of the methods of science, brings me more nearly face to face with a Sphinx whose riddle I must answer or be devoured; and I am already too near either to keep up my own courage, or to seem to keep her off, by whistling orthodox traditions, be they derived from never so many Popes or Churches. I can only say with Ajax:—

"O King, O Father, hear my humble prayer!—
If I must perish, I thy will obey;
But let me perish in the face of day!"

A. What is the riddle?

F. How to reconcile the faith which I learnt at my mother's knee, and without which I feel that life would be worthless, with an honest unflinching application to the Bible of that method of investigation which Bacon taught us to employ with Nature, and which I need not tell you is now known to be no less really, though not so easily, applicable to Man, social or individual. If you can help me to solve the

problem, in God's name do so: for it is a terrible one to me.

A. In God's name David slew Goliah with a pebble. God's Name is Truth. If Truth bids you follow to the bottomless pit, go: you will find God there. If the most orthodox tradition offers to lead you to Heaven, refuse: for you will not find Him by that path. Let me cap your Homer with Tennyson:—

> "There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds.
> He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
> He would not make his judgment blind,
> He faced the spectres of the mind
> And laid them: thus he came at length
> To find a stronger faith his own;
> And Power was with him in the night,
> Which makes the darkness and the light,
> And dwells not in the light alone,
> But in the darkness and the cloud."

F. I hear these vague generalities often enough from my neighbours, and have tried to get a meaning out of them till I am tired. Dare you come to particulars—for in these the real difficulty lies? Dare you apply the scientific method fairly to the Bible?

A. I have thorough faith in the method,

though not much in my own skill in applying it. When I do find myself on that king's highway I fear neither man nor devil, not even your Sphinx though I see her daily devouring many "with privy paw," and know the feel of her grip myself. Propound a subject, and then let us apply the method and see where it will lead us to.

F. Comte asserts as the fundamental law of the progress of human knowledge that it has three stages—the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive: is this true?

A. Wiser men than I recognise the merits of the statement. But there are certain amplifications of the original which you have omitted, and especially the assertion that the three methods are radically opposed and exclude each the other, which I must (with unfeigned respect for M. Comte's genius) demur to. Mr. Mill has entered a protest on behalf of Psychology, or a Science of mind, the successful maintenance of which will show that there is a permanent as well as a transitory element in the metaphysical stage: and I offer a like protest in behalf of the existence of a permanent Theolo-

gical element in all periods, which M. Comte's law, as he states and applies it, not only takes no cognisance of, but denies, notwithstanding a body of facts as extensive and important as those which it does so well explain. In no age or country has religious belief been merely such as M. Comte asserts or assumes: along with that belief in an *arbitrary* Divine will which alone he recognises there has always existed another quite different belief which his law cannot possibly be made to account for.

F. The existence of the belief does not prove the reality of its supposed objects.

A. No: but it proves some defect in the law, or its application, if this must ignore the belief in order to maintain its own truth. I think that it would be very difficult to overrate the importance of M. Comte's discovery: but I am not the less confident that it only needs an equal master of Positive Science to show us that there has always been a law of theological growth as well as decay at work; and that when those facts which are not the less real because they have been overlooked by the one philosopher shall be scientifically handled by the other, the old faith

in God and in Christ will be established as it never has been yet.

F. "Ay, Sir, but 'While the grass grows:'"—It is but mockery to tell me to wait for this supposed Christian philosopher.

A. Gibbon wrote the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire; but the unwritten Rise and Progress of the Nations out of that Empire is not a less matter-of-fact history, and every man may get a tolerable knowledge of it for practical purposes though it has no Gibbon. I could reproach our sworn teachers bitterly enough for their disregard of all the real doubts and difficulties of thinking men in the present day: but, after all, every man must think for himself, and he who reasons on a sufficiently broad base of facts need not fear the result. If you choose to take the phrase "positive investigation" in a merely technical and professional sense, and insist on excluding from your field of vision all facts which do not fall within that sense, you may and will no doubt get rid of the Christian faith, with its Bible and its God, as completely as Strauss or Comte or their followers do. The orthodox howling and

hooting with which we are accustomed to put down our sceptics, naturally gives an honest man like yourself a bias in their favour : but you must not let this, nor yet the noble moral and even religious earnestness of so many of them, blind you to their intellectual one-sidedness, and their unconscious habit of ignoring or denying all facts which do not fit their theories, and of supposing that the discussion is about opinions when it relates to facts. Did you ever know a sceptic who did not found his negative arguments upon the assumption that Christianity is a system of opinions which neither he nor his orthodox opponents have ever thought of deriving from, or verifying by, facts? Or if you fairly compare Neander's Life of Christ with that of Strauss, or with Mr. Newman's book on the Soul, or M. Comte's Catéchisme, must you not admit that the first is the only properly "positive" or scientific work, and that the constructive efforts of the others, however able in their way, savour strongly of the "metaphysical" stage.

F. Well, give me an example of the mode in which you maintain your own position. You

say the Bible is a Revelation, the sceptic says it must be treated like other books.

A. I would there were more hope of its being soon treated like other books, either by him or by us. Sick people and old women in cottages read the Bible with a deep and earnest feeling, which suits their spiritual wants as really as the wants of a cultivated scholar's mind are met here and there by reading Homer or Horace. But a very great part of our orthodox Protestant reverence for the Bible is a scandalous Fetish-worship. We make an idol of the book, and we treat it much as other idolaters treat their gods, which they kick and cuff' till they answer them. And the sceptic, naturally supposing that we know our own books best, follows our example. Where do you find the Bible treated by its worshippers with the genuine reverence with which a Müller or a Niebuhr treats his classical authorities?

F. Well, but what do *you* say? Is the Bible a Revelation? Can you maintain this, if you submit the matter to fair, positive, investigation?

A. Tell me the tests.

F. Mr. Mill, whom you must of course accept

as the proper authority on the subject, says that in the present state of science there are three stages of investigation necessary to complete the process of scientific inquiry :—Induction of the law involved in the simple facts which are within reach of direct observation; Deduction of the more comprehensive law which is required for the explanation of classes of facts beyond our immediate reach; and, lastly, Verification of this deduction, by comparing it with the facts and ascertaining whether it does explain them all.

A. Nothing can be clearer. Let the claim of the Bible stand or fall by this test. I give up what Comte's formula would designate as the "theological" notion that the Bible is a magical or quasi magical work, produced by God's employment of certain men's minds and pens in a manner which I must call not super- but sub-natural: I give up the "metaphysical" notion that Revelation and Inspiration are entities: and I come to the few simple facts which are within my own observation and power of experiment. Does the Bible *reveal* anything to me which I not only have not learnt by any other means, but which every experiment and observation that I have

made leads me to conclude I could not have learnt by any other means? I say it does: that it reveals, or unveils, to the eye of my reason certain facts of a spiritual world and life, and that it assists and enables me to effect the inductions requisite for ascertaining the laws (the empirical laws if you please) which govern those facts.

F. What if I deny that are they facts? What if I assert that they are only acts of your own consciousness, projected forms of your own imagination, to which you from unconscious prejudice and habit give the force of objective realities?

A. Ah! we have got to the bottom at last. Mere logic-chopping is only fit for school-boys: you and I are old enough to know that it is not in drawing inferences but in sifting premisses that the main business of thinking and reasoning consists. All astronomy is based on the fact that there is a Sun and an Earth: if you have never seen either, or have doubts whether your eyes do not deceive you, you must re-investigate the point for yourself, and come to a decision on it too, before you can profit even by the wisdom of a Newton. And so it is with this matter of

Revelation. You must first get at the simple fundamental facts by your own observation, which is the only way possible. If you accept the sceptical platform and discuss the subject as one of opinions, you are like the Jesuits who published Newton's Principia as an ingenious hypothesis on which to exercise the wits, though they recognised the right of the Church to deny the facts.

F. You mean then to say that there is a spiritual world and life to which both God and man belong, and which exist irrespectively of our cognisance of them: that in practice one man has and another has not such cognisance: that you assert such cognisance for yourself, and say that it was the Bible that gave it you?

A. Yes: the Bible so far explains the facts as to enable my reason first to see plainly that they are facts, and then that they stand in an intelligible sequence and relation to each other, that is, are governed by a law.

F. But an empirical law only, and which may be superseded by wider investigations?

A. Which empirical law, arrived at by induction from the facts within my direct cognisance,

the Bible next shows me how to apply by the deductive method to the whole subject :—to the appearance or non-appearance in other men of the phenomena which I have first noticed in myself; to the relations in which men stand to each other; and to the relations in which they stand to God and God to them.

F. And then you conclude that the history of the World and the Church supplies you with an adequate verification to complete your scientific process?

A. The verification, from the very nature of the problem, cannot be complete in this life. One of our main deductions is the reality and continuance of a life over which death has no power; and this can only be verified by those who have passed through death. But I do say boldly that the verifications are ample already, and every day adds to them. No facts in any other science have been established by any such amount of "binding and pressing, torturing and questioning" (to use Bacon's phrases) as have the facts of Revelation and Inspiration; only the subjects of the question have not been metals or gases but the souls and bodies of men and women

and children, for two, nay four, thousand years. But observe that I claim the character of positive science for Christian theology, and that I do not pretend to know anything about either Final Causes or absolute, as opposed to relative, Truth. I assert nothing more than the existence and relations of certain invariable sequences of facts.

F. Still I say let us come to closer quarters: Your "positive" view of Revelation deals with wide generalisations, but will your method answer equally with the specific case of Miracles?

A. I am ready to try: but remember that I shall shrink from no heterodoxy into which that method fairly leads me.

F. Then let us take Mr. Mill's Chapter on Miracles as our starting-point. Every thing which he excludes from the issue may be safely excluded by us, or by any one else who in our day feels and knows that his faith must be based on reason or it cannot stand at all.

A. Well, state you own position as to Miracles.

F. It is this:—The laws of nature are invariable in their operations, and the same effects must be constantly expected from the same

causes: but on the other hand if there be an Author of those laws, who still retains the power by which He originally imposed them, He may at any time suspend their operation if He will; nor would it be contrary, but according, to reasonable and scientific expectation and probability that He should so suspend them for an adequate cause.*

A. Because such a suspension of a given law of nature would in fact indicate the introduction of a new cause replacing that previously in operation, and not an irregular action of existing causes; and so it would at bottom be no contradiction but a new assertion of the old universal law of the invariable sequence of the same effects from the same causes? If therefore there can be in any case this adequate cause for a miracle, then the actual occurrence of a miracle in that case would be satisfactorily established by the same amount of historical evidence as would establish any ordinary natural event? A very clear example of the deductive and verificative branches of our method.

* Mill's *System of Logic*, vol. ii. chap. 25.

F. Yes: but can you produce an "Adequate Cause" for the Bible miracles? It must be an induction from facts which are patent to observation and experiment; and not a metaphysical hypothesis, or a theocratic injunction: and till you produce this, I cannot listen to any historical evidence to prove that miracles have occurred. I have tried hard and long to do so: the man who sees the pit of Atheism before him wants no orthodox divines to stimulate his desire to put off the terrible leap as long as possible. But it will not do. I see and feel a certain apparent force in the argument which Paley, and which a greater master of historical criticism than Paley (I mean Niebuhr himself) has drawn from such facts as the Apostles' simplicity, straightforwardness, disinterestedness, and readiness to die for their cause. But I am too soon reminded that the difficulty is only pushed out of sight to re-appear in a moment: the world may stand on the elephant and the elephant on the tortoise, but what does the tortoise stand on? The evidence Paley and Niebuhr insist on does, as they say, possess a *degree* of credibility which is rarely predicable of evidence

about ordinary events; but it lacks it *in kind*. In reading Herodotus, Livy, or Bede, we believe the facts which are in harmony with the laws of nature, and (with a reasonable suspension of judgment as to facts which may be explainable by natural causes not known to us) we disbelieve the miracles as a matter of course, though we have just the same historical authority for the one as for the other. And though ordinary Protestants take for granted that there is a plain line of demarcation between Bede and the Bible, I confess myself unable to answer Dr. J. H. Newman when he tells us that we are bound to believe the ecclesiastical miracles on the same grounds as we receive the Bible miracles on.

A. Do you remember what Burke and Arnold say of the miracles in Bede?

F. No. But surely, neither believed in them?

A. I don't think they did, though each declines to pronounce peremptorily. But Burke's argument, which Arnold adopts, is that if the miracles recorded by the early historians were necessary to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons it is reasonable to believe that they were

wrought; for that it is impossible to look at the political and social results of that conversion, not only to England but to the world, and not admit that it was worthy to be effected by any necessary means.

F. They too then completely adopted the idea of Mill's "Adequate Cause:" but what I want is the Fact. Is not our positive science with its exact methods reducing the Bible miracles to the same ideal and hypothetical condition as Burke seems to have left those of Bede in?

A. The method must be right if we are using it rightly; for it is a simple examination of facts. I think it will compel us to abandon many superstitions both ancient and modern about miracles. It will compel us to bring into clear light and thorough distinctness the statements and the meaning of the Bible language when it uses the words "powers" and "signs" which our translators habitually render "miracles:"—for though there are no doubt some instances in which "miracle" is the proper version of the word; and though even where this is not the case we must not evade the question

whether the original writer did not himself believe in miracles, both generally and in the particular case, in the same sense as his translator did; yet an important confusion has been made by our translators, and one which certainly indicates a mixture of superstition with their faith. In other instances it will compel us to wait for further critical investigation before we can say what the facts, the actual occurrences, were which the narrator describes:— for it is only a few of the highest class of Christian commentators in Germany (I fear I cannot say there are any in England) who, under the pressure of the destructive criticism of their opponents are beginning to see that in order to understand a statement in the Bible we must be able to understand what actually happened, and not merely that it was something which though unintelligible must have been very good because it is in the Bible. And therefore on this subject, as in the physical sciences, we and probably our children must be content to suspend our judgment as to many of the facts which are still obscure but may be expected to be cleared up by repeated and persevering efforts of suc-

cessive investigators. But I am convinced that we may already, if we choose, see enough of the law of miracles and its working to explain the more important phenomena; and especially to throw a flood of light upon the so-called Old Testament Miracles and show them to have a worth which is wholly lost to us as long as we adhere to the old superstitious notions about them.

F. If you can show me this in any tangible matter of fact detail, we shall be coming nearer the point than I yet see much hope of.

A. You must not forget that I do not engage to do more than follow out the scientific method of investigation in a few instances, in order that you may judge for yourself whether the fair results are such as I suppose. For pardon me if I remind you that no man can provide another with a concise compendium of rational Christianity ready-made to save him the trouble of thinking farther for himself. There is no short cut to knowledge on this subject more than on any other. "Happy" indeed "is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: she is more precious

than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her: she is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her:"—but they only do find her who "seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasure."

If you will allow me I will send you a paper which will go into some of the points our conversation has touched upon; and we may afterwards be able to renew our discussion with more advantage.

F. I am ready either to read or talk so that the matter be but to the purpose; for as I have told you the subject has to me the interest of life and death.

A. And to me too I hope.

CHAPTER I.

Inquiry proposed. — New Testament Miracles. — The Resurrection of Christ and its "Adequate Cause." — The Incarnation. — Raising the dead. — Casting out devils. — The loaves and fishes. — The Gift of tongues. — Ecclesiastical Miracles. — Answers to prayer. — Providence.

I PROPOSE to inquire what will be the practical result of applying to the Miracles of the Old and New Testament, the canon of Mr. Mill that a miracle is credible, but only credible, when we can show an Adequate Cause for its occurrence as well as ordinary historical evidence that it did occur.

In such an inquiry the general rule that every subject is best understood by the examination of its completest specimens directs us to the miracles of the New Testament: and first among these to the Incarnation and the Resurrection of our Lord.

The New Testament every where asserts, and all Christians in all times confirm the assertion

as being that of a fact, that the spiritual man discerns spiritual realities as the natural man does natural things, and that this power enables him to reply in the affirmative to the question which the Apostle puts to the Corinthians — "Know ye not of your ownselves how that Jesus Christ dwelleth in you except ye be reprobates?" That is, that every Christian man who has not renounced his birthright knows of his ownself — by direct personal acquaintance with the fact as a fact, and not by mere logical inference and opinion deduced from statements in the Bible or by the Church — that his God and his Lord is actually present with him in his inmost heart, and there dwelling in communion with him: that this God and Lord is the same with the Man Jesus whose life and death in Judea the Gospels relate: and that this latter fact — that the man Jesus was God taking on Himself the nature of man — is not a fact believed by the Christian in spite of his reason and by some credulous submission to an oracular and otherwise unintelligible authority, but a fact of which the outward and historical parts are in entire and intelligible accordance with

the inward and spiritual, and of which the reasonableness and the agreement with all that his reason makes him cognisant of upon any other subject whatever become more certain and more clear in all their details in proportion as he becomes familiar with them.

Whether this spiritual discernment or "Christian consciousness" on which the whole argument depends be itself a fact, or a chimerical fancy, must be decided by the usual methods of investigation. I will only observe that he who does investigate this as he would any other form of human knowledge or consciousness, and who therefore, in as far as he requires the evidence of others, seeks it from the most enlightened and not the most incompetent informants, will find that from the first assertion of the fact by Christ himself down to its maintenance by the Neanders and Maurices of our own day, the operation of all the ordinary laws of the human mind is recognised in whatever they teach of its presence or absence, its development or decay. With that exclusion of final causes and restriction within the limits of cognisable phenomena which positive science demands, they declare that

we "cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth," but that this consciousness is almost invariably awakened under the conditions of Christian education; that, like every other form of consciousness, it requires habitual culture for its mature development and continued activity, which fails wherever this is neglected as it commonly is under the distractions of business or pleasure; that it is frequently re-awakened from this inaction or decay by some event—a sickness or a marriage, a birth or a death—which breaks the chain of worldly routine; and that it is seldom wholly and finally extinguished, as most men feel and show, at intervals through life, by a sense of their loss of it and desire for its recovery as something which their inmost heart tells them to be more precious than all their possessions, even though they may not have earnestness and energy enough to form anew those mental and moral habits by which it—like every other kind of rational and moral knowledge—can alone be held.

But to return to the argument: he who has this faith and knowledge "of his ownself" not only finds no difficulty in believing that He who

was God as well as man could not be held by the bonds of death but did at His own will rise again from the dead, but the difficulty would be not to believe it: for he finds that this resurrection does enter into rational and intelligible combination with all the facts of his own spiritual life just in the way which St. Paul and the other writers of the New Testament explain in what we may call their philosophy of the Gospel. In a word, the Christian has that amount of ordinary historical testimony to the fact of the Resurrection which would establish any non-miraculous event, and he has the adequate cause for God's suspending the laws of nature which makes such testimony valid when the event is miraculous.

The adequate cause for the miraculous Incarnation of Jesus Christ is not opened out and illustrated by the Epistles as that of the Resurrection is: and it would seem (if we are not misled by fragmentary statements) that so profound a philosopher as Coleridge doubted the former even when his belief in Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God was become the basis of his whole philosophy speculative as well

as practical. But apparently this doubt of Coleridge was one of the many instances of that defect in his mind which led him positively to dislike to find ideas realised in facts: and I believe the like defect will be found accompanying and explaining the like doubt in other cases, and that there is always an unhealthy excess of metaphysical action in that state of mind which hinders the Christian from arriving in due time at the conviction that his reason not only admits, but demands, belief in the miraculous Incarnation as well as Resurrection. It is surely more difficult to conceive of the Creator of the world becoming a creature without, than with, a suspension of the law of ordinary generation, and more in accordance with all the rest of the Christian's faith, that the Lord of the human race should have taken human nature on Himself in the manner related in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke than that (being God as the argument assumes) He should have taken on Himself the person of a mere individual man, a son of Joseph as well as Mary. I need not repeat the arguments for the reasonableness of the idea of the Incarnation which have been

deduced with so much ability by modern as well as old divines from the ancient belief of all nations that their heroes had some such superhuman origin, and were therefore not the less but the more human — true heads and kings of men. Perhaps those are hardly less interesting which are suggested by modern geological and ethnological inquiries as to the introduction of new creations of animate or human species into the inanimate world while it is only keeping on its old routine: but to these we shall have occasion to recur. Another class of reasons is indicated by the position which Christianity, and Christianity alone, asserts and maintains for women, who in various ages and nations have been variously treated as the honoured or the degraded dependents of men, but never recognised to possess each a distinct and perfect human personality of her own except where it has been first recognised that the Lord of men derived an actual and perfect manhood from a virgin mother. And other reasons again, perhaps to most religious minds the weightiest of all, are those which regard the exclusion of the hereditary taint of sin which we

know does invariably accompany all ordinary parentage and births, however inexplicable the fact.

These are only a few of the points of light and reason which begin to shine out as soon as we look at the Incarnation from the ground of faith in Jesus Christ the Lord of our spirits. Let a man first become personally acquainted with Jesus Christ in his heart, and then he will be able to judge whether the Gospel records of His birth, as of His whole history, are reasonable and probable and to be believed on ordinary evidence. To this test accordingly we must bring all the other miracles of Jesus. Nor need we have any fears for the result: for our faith is antecedent to and independent of the miracles, which if they stand will stand because they are in harmony with that faith, and if they fall cannot shake what their fall will thus show them to have no real connection with. I would intreat the truth-loving inquirer to look well to this: to see for himself the fact — for fact it is — that if his faith is faith in Christ it will suffer as little from his honestly and reverently doubting a particular miracle for which his

reason and conscience fail of supplying him with an adequate cause, even though his doubt is an error, as it would from the opposite error of supposing an event to be miraculous which was only the effect of natural causes unknown to him. I think indeed that the weight of fact and of reason is on the side of those who maintain that the more our Lord's miracles are examined and contrasted with the ecclesiastical and pagan miracles the more apparent does their essential fitness and reasonableness become: but as the really critical investigation of the facts — of the question in each case "What actually happened" — is still in its infancy, I abstain from the language of dogmatism.

The miracles of raising Lazarus and the Widow's son from the dead are liable to the special objection that the narrators might have honestly mistaken the appearance for the reality of death, and that this is the more likely as their simple statements seem to show that they had no suspicion that any accurate verification of the apparent fact was necessary: but this defect of evidence is, as far as I can judge, compensated for by the special fitness and proba-

bility that the Lord of life and death should have manifested His power by raising men from the dead; and therefore my reason demands only the ordinary evidence that these men were really dead.

The "casting out of devils" still waits (as far as I am aware) for the light which would be thrown upon it by a scientific medical investigation of the opinion maintained by some theologians, that the phenomena of madness and its cure are best explained by the old Jewish belief of demoniacal possession. But however this point shall be eventually decided (and I confess that I myself expect it to be in the negative, and that the Church will eventually conclude that there was no more reason why Christ should have set right the received notions and employed scientific language on this subject than on that of the sunrise) it must be admitted that if the Lord of sanity and temperance did once walk the earth in human form He might be expected to have exercised with immediately effective results that power of infusing moral invigoration into the mentally or morally insane subject of His compassion, in the gradual exertion of

which consists the cure of all such diseases by wise and good physicians, and friends with the true spirit of physicians, in the present day. Notwithstanding the objections of Strauss, I must continue to think that in the most detailed of these narratives we may accurately distinguish the successive acts of the maniac and of Jesus with the reasons of them, and that both facts and reasons are in exact correspondence with the instances of madness and the methods of cure which may be witnessed now; only that the curative power was divinely and miraculously intensified in the former case. The maniac in a sane interval, though with a morbidly heightened power of discerning what madmen now call "a master spirit" in their physicians, entreats Jesus to deliver him from his sufferings; but on Jesus "commanding the unclean spirit to come out of him" the man's sane self-consciousness is immediately overpowered by a new access of mania in which he conceives himself as one with the evil spirit and as having a common interest with it in their non-separation: Jesus, to soothe the paroxysm and to re-awaken the sane consciousness of the man by drawing his thoughts to a

point of human interest (just as the physician does now in such cases), asks him—the man not the demon—what his name is ; but the access is too strong, and the man answers in the demon's name, yet at the same time giving vent to the accumulated thoughts with which he had long brooded over the many forms of his own mental and moral vices, and the way in which as often as he had struggled to shake them off they had mastered him with the completeness with which he had seen, or knew he might one day see, the heathen legions of Rome put down any revolt of those who had once had a right to boast that they were the free and chosen people of God. It seems to me in accordance with all medical analogy to think with Olshausen that if the Saviour had put forth more immediate power the man's life must have sunk under the curative process : and so too I understand both our Lord's original admission and humouring of the man's fixed belief that he was possessed by a legion of devils, and His consequent permission to him to hunt the swine into the sea under the mad notion that so only could he reconcile his own deliverance from the devils with that interest

in their convenience which, from their long abode in himself, he supposed they had a right to claim. And though there may be some doubt what did happen as to the swine there is no reason, at least to those who treat the book like any other book, for setting aside that part of the story which is made out and intelligible. They will expect that the partial obscurity will one day not only receive, but give, light; and even if this should be done by the discovery of some inaccuracy or misconception in the narrator they will be as little troubled in their recognition of the worth of the book, as revelation, as they are now by their inability to decide whether the maniac was a Gergasene or a Gadarene, or why Matthew says there were two men and Mark only one.

And though none but an illogical mind will ask *how* a miracle happened, since that would be to ask what were the natural antecedents of an event admitted by the premisses to be supernatural, yet we may and must ask *what* happened: and the answer is specially difficult to give as to the miracles of the loaves and fishes, and the wine, because it is much harder to

realise the fact of a relation between the Divine Word and the properties of matter than to conceive of a like Divine Energy acting immediately on the health and life of an individual man. But chemical science, in showing that bread, flesh, wine, are composite substances which might conceivably be produced by some other processes than the actual ones, shows this difficulty to be rather apparent than real, and that it may have a solution exactly analogous to that of the other cases; while on the other hand we here too appeal to the *à-priori* probability that Jesus should give this evidence that He was the Lord of nature, and especially of nature as subject to the service of man. Among the attributes of our Lord there is none more important to us than that which the very word "Lord" expresses in its original English meaning — the "Bread-giver." He who knows and feels in his heart that it is Christ who is daily and hourly sustaining him both in body and soul by the Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God does not require much external evidence to satisfy him

that Jesus showed himself in this character also when on earth.

Proceeding from the narrative of our Lord's life upon earth to the Book of Acts, we have to ask whether the miracles in this too can show the adequate cause which is required before we can believe them. The chief characteristic miracle here is the Gift of Tongues, as that of the Resurrection is in the Gospels: but the critical and historical question of what the narrator himself meant to report, and what, if his report is not wholly fictitious, did happen, is not so clear in the one case as in the other. I myself indeed am satisfied to adopt the investigations and conclusions of Neander on the subject.* He grants that the historian's informant appears (from Acts, ii. 6. 11.) to have supposed that the disciples actually spoke in foreign tongues previously unknown to them, but shows that this supposition is not reconcilable with *all* the facts of the case. These point to the conclusion that the Gift of Tongues was the power, not of speaking foreign lan-

* *Planting of the Christian Church*, 4th edition, translated by Ryland (in Bohn's *Stand. Libr.* vol. ii. p. 58., ff.).

guages, but of so declaring the wisdom and work of God in the more than human words of an inspired enthusiasm as to be at once intelligible to a variety of hearers from different countries and consequently of opposite habits of thought as well as dialect. Such men, being Jews or proselytes, would probably enough have known a little Syriac or Greek, but not so as to have understood either from the lips of unlettered Galilean provincials speaking on the most mysterious subjects. Original genius employing trained eloquence as its instrument might have made them understand without a miracle: but only the present power of the Holy Spirit suddenly bringing the speakers and hearers into harmony and endowing each with the qualifications needed for rational communication, could have been effectual here. This seems to me at once the more critical interpretation and that best in accordance with the whole scope and meaning of all the miracles of Christ Himself. For a miracle we recognise it to be in this way of understanding what happened, no less than if we adopt the other and older view as Olshausen prefers to do. And then the

question whether there was an adequate cause for such a manifestation of divine power on this and the other occasions in which it is related in the Book of Acts, is the question whether we believe in God the Holy Ghost, and in His coming to establish the Catholic Church upon earth and to be its Comforter and Guide with as real and actual a presence as that of Jesus Christ had been to his Apostles while He was upon earth. If this personal faith in the Holy Spirit is an essential part of our faith in Christ, and if the setting up of the Church of Christ is to us an actual fact in which we see, with St. Paul, the commencing realisation of God's whole scheme of creation and regeneration of mankind, then we shall not hesitate to reply, that there was an adequate cause for the miracle of the Gift of Tongues on the Day of Pentecost. It is not necessary for our present purpose to come to a positive decision as to all the other miracles in the book. Of some it may be doubted whether the narrator himself supposed them to be miraculous rather than providential events; and of others, such as the escape of Peter from prison, whether he has not unconsciously con-

verted into a miracle an occurrence which he did not himself witness or hear of at the time.* Of some again we may find that they must be accepted as miracles or rejected as fictions; and if so, we shall then have to ask ourselves whether their absence would, or would not, leave an unaccountable blank in the series of those outward and visible pledges which our faith demands as the sacramental counterparts of the inward spiritual reality of the Gospel, and as tokens that God has actually taken up His abode with us in the Church. Let us get at the laws, and the facts will gradually find their proper places: till they do so, we can suspend our judgment on this or that detail which has not yet been critically and scientifically cleared from obscurity.

But though the necessity of miracles at the first establishment of the Church should be admitted, it would give no support to a common opinion of English Protestants that the Apostles possessed an inherent and habitual power of working miracles, nor to the Romanist doctrine

* This is Neander's conclusion. — *Planting of the Christian Church* (as above), vol. ii. p. 70.

(which we are told is logically deducible from our own admission as to the Bible miracles) of the continuance of that miraculous power in the Church ever since. St. Paul's solicitude for the health of Epaphroditus, Timothy, and Trophimus*, proves that he pretended no such power though he "was not a whit behind the chiefest of the Apostles:" and if we consider it we shall see that such a power, once become inherent and habitual in the Church, would (notwithstanding the most careful verbal distinctions) exclude Christ from His own kingdom and put the Church in His place, and that thereupon the supposed power would cease to be spiritual and become natural. The miracles of Christ and his Apostles are spiritual, for in them the immediate Will of God touches for a moment on some law of His natural creation and for a moment suspends it, or rather imparts to it a higher energy than its own, but neither merges itself in, nor disturbs and distorts, the natural order of creation. But a perpetual sequence of miracles invariably following the existence of the Church in a country is only a

* Philippians, ii. 27.; 1 Tim. v. 23.; 2 Tim. iv. 20.

second *natural* system set side by side with God's original creation; and it seems hardly possible to conceive the need of such an *imperium in imperio*, or to understand how its action, if it did exist, could be other than an irregular disturbance of that world which after its kind is still very good, since it has never departed from the laws and the order first imposed on it by its Maker. For whether it be true or false that the Church can reverse the harmless laws of matter, and make pictures weep and blood (or resin) melt at regularly recurring periods of time, it is certain that the belief in such miracles has no power over the unruly wills of men except to bind them faster in the chains of ignorance and sensuality.

I appeal to the history of the Church against this doctrine of the continuance of miracles, and I appeal also to the personal experience of every Christian. The Christian knows that prayer is not merely a reverential attitude of his own spirit towards God but moreover an actual communion of his spirit with God, and that whatever be the need which he makes the subject of his prayer he has the perfect sympathy of

a Heavenly Father who is always more ready to hear and grant than we can be to ask. Yet this confidence does not make him desire any more than expect a miraculous interference with the laws of nature in order that he may receive the good or be spared the evil which he desires or fears. His experience is that just in proportion as his solicitude has been deepest, but his reliance upon God's love and care for him in that particular case the most trustful, has he become less anxious for even what we call a providential controul of the ordinary course of nature. If it comes he accepts it thankfully, but if it does not come—if some calamity, some irresistible law of nature, presses upon him with crushing force—he finds that in the resignation which can so enter into the mind and plans of God, and so feel His presence and love as to recognise them even in the unchecked course of natural events, there is a greater freedom of spirit and mastery of nature by his spirit than if he could miraculously dispose all those events at his own pleasure. If he whose spirit is conformed to that of his Lord prays at the beginning of a trial that the cup may if possible pass

from him, when the trial is at its worst he prays only that his Father's will may be done. So Jesus prayed; and every follower of His understands the exact accuracy of the assertion of the Apostolic writer, that "He was heard in that he feared."

These considerations may help us to remove a difficulty which sceptical persons are fond of throwing in the path of those who refer particular events to God's providence, and see in them claims on man's thankfulness. A pious man expresses his thankfulness for the providential mercy which saved him in a shipwreck, when all the rest were drowned, and the sceptic asks "What was *their* condition? To say that they were overlooked when you were cared for is to charge God with caprice, since we may assert on the highest authority that they did not perish for their greater sinfulness; and if you say that God, who knows all things, knew death to be as right and desirable for them as life for you then what meaning is there in the thankfulness which you suppose to be specially called for by your own preservation? This is your dilemma, that Providence is either

the ordinary and invariable working of the laws of nature or it is a capricious interference with these." To which we reply that it is neither one nor the other. The Providence of God is best understood by comparing it with the like power possessed and exercised by man, who is the image of God. The wise and good man does not attempt to supersede the laws and operations of nature in the conduct of his daily life, but he can and does habitually influence and direct their action by acting on them with his rational human will. The life of the savage animal man is the mere life of nature, but the life of the civilised rational man, whether personal or social, is the result of a perpetual modification of the natural by the human life, and of a quickening transfusion of the latter into the former. That does not deserve the name of human existence in which the man is not personally present and personally exerting this power of his will or spirit upon all nature around him. He controuls and modifies the animal appetites and passions by the habits and customs of domestic order, courtesies, affections; he makes the natural laws of time and space and

motion, of climate and season, of health and disease, of ignorance folly and vice, more or less subordinate to his reason and will—prescribing the use of ships and railroads and telescopes, employing the art of the physician, promoting education, and enforcing the order of civil soicety: and above all he can, and does as the occasion offers, direct not only the bodies and the bodily acts of his fellow men, as of other material things, but also their spirits and wills—imparting his wisdom and strength of mind by an immediate act of his spirit to the spirit of him whose own portion of these is inferior to that of his guide. And the man who is thus guided and helped looks up to the man who helps him, and a personal relationship of trust and love is established between them, and it is not the less but the more personal, trustful, and loving on both sides, because it is entirely reasonable and orderly, and could not be otherwise without some defect in the character of one or both of the parties concerned. And thus it is with God's Providence: the world has not been created and then left by the Demiurgus to run its course to the end of time, and to carry

mankind along with it as the most cunning piece of its mechanism. The wise and good, as well as almighty, Father is present with His Creation, upholding, controuling, and regulating it in all its parts by His Providence: and though this Providential controul does in deed overlook nothing, but is complete and operative in every part, yet it is not a law of nature but the presence of a Person; and as such does reasonably excite the interest and the gratitude of each man whose heart is sustained or his life ameliorated by its action upon himself. And if the imperfection of human thought and language offer him no terms which will express his personal recognition of this personal Friend with complete accuracy, and the frailty of human nature no security that his faith will not degenerate into a selfish superstition, he commits the solecism, and runs the risk, rather than deny the great facts of his life because they will not narrow themselves to fit a logical formula, or a mechanical morality.

CHAPTER II.

Miracles of the Old Testament.—Argument for them, and objections to it.—Comparison with the ecclesiastical miracles.—Practical results of the orthodox belief.—Early Hebrew literature compared with that of other nations.—Grote and Müller.—Decay of other faiths: permanence of the Christian.—Revelation does not imply a book miraculously free from errors.—Results of the method proposed.

If from some such inductions and by some such verifications as were given in the last chapter we are able to deduce the law of the miracles of the New Testament, we may proceed from the position thus gained to apply our method to the more complicated and obscure question whether there was an adequate cause for the miracles related in the Old Testament. The reasoning of those who maintain the affirmative takes some such form as this:—that as the New Testament records the series of outward and visible events in and by which God the Son and God the Holy Ghost revealed themselves to man, and brought man into direct spiritual

relationship with God by the setting up on earth of that spiritual society which we call the Church, so the Old Testament relates an analogous series of events in and by which God the Father revealed Himself to man as the Author and Upholder of family and national relationships, and as the personal and present Source of the life (also spiritual though inferior in depth and activity to that given to the Church) which, operating through those relationships, raises man out of a merely animal existence; and that there was consequently the same adequate cause why God should select one Family (of the Patriarchs) and one Nation (of the Jews), and by miraculous signs indicate that these were illustrative examples of the method by which He would regulate all other families and nations without miracles, as there was for the like illustrative instance once for all in the Church of the Apostles. This argument has much to recommend it: it meets the desire which we all have in the present day for grand comprehensive schemes of which all the parts have a logical correspondence, and the equally strong desire to retain the old belief of our fathers and their

reverence for the letter of Scripture without denying or ignoring the principles of modern science; and it is held to be satisfactory by men so capable both as philosophers and as Christians of judging soundly that it may show more presumption than wisdom to say peremptorily that it is not tenable, or that its conclusions will not one day be among our universally recognised truths. Yet I am compelled to admit that on a closer and more detailed examination and application it proves to be open to very serious objections. It is often a painful thing to have to give up even those portions of our own and our fathers' and brethrens' creed which we know to be not only not essential but in fact merely the ivy or the rust which is injuring, while it ornaments, the building itself: but he who loves truth above all things must make up his mind to this sacrifice, even though it should leave a permanent sense of loss to the mind, as from the force of associations it well may: he must buy the truth and sell it not though he should be able to sell it not only for reputation with others but for peace with himself. And if I should find a reader who is still seeking for

light upon this question because he has not found it in any of the received answers, orthodox or sceptical, he may derive some help from a statement of the conclusions which I have arrived at after long and cautious examination of this subject: and this not the less though he himself should be led to a different result, nor because I here offer him no more than a private, and as it seems to me a probable, conclusion which can only be established, if it is to be established, by repeated and independent investigations of the subject by others.

The main difficulty then in the view of the miracles of the Old Testament above stated, is that it seems to lay them open to the objection which is so fatal to the ecclesiastical miracles: — namely, that they are not single tokens at a single point of time of the presence of God with the chosen Family or Nation, but a new natural system supervening upon the first, and there continuing through a long series of ages: — for it would not be possible for any criticism, however free from the fear of irreverently disturbing the letter of Scripture, to draw a line between real and supposed miracles in the Old

Testament history in the way which is made possible as regards the Christian Church by the fact that our ecclesiastical histories are not a part of the New Testament. Nor is this an objection of form, sufficiently answered by practical differences between the cases. It may be admitted that the rational dignity and worthiness of the Old Testament miracles stand in marked contrast to multitudes of the childish and worse than childish ecclesiastical legends: but carry this distinction to its height and though for some purposes it is well worthy of consideration it still remains a distinction of degree and not of kind. And the result — the influence which the belief in each case has on men's minds — seems to prove the identity in kind no less than the difference in degree. The received belief and explanations of the Old Testament miracles are scepticising the minds of thoughtful Protestants just as the ecclesiastical miracles do the reflecting Romanists: they are hindering men from believing that God is the Lord of our family and national relationships just as the others shut Christ out of His Church. It was thought a triumph of orthodoxy when the learned Müller

consented to the omission from the English translation of his "Dorians" of the sentence which asserted that the Return of the Heracleids was an event analogous to the Exodus of Israel; and if Sir James Brooke and his friends, instead of defending his slaughter of the Dyak pirates by reference to the rights of commerce and civilisation, had said that it was like Joshua's destruction of the Canaanites, the charge of blasphemy would have been added to that of inhumanity: for in each of the Scriptural cases there was a "miraculous" command, and that miracle is held to justify an act which if done under circumstances corresponding in all things except the miracle would be unlawful. Nay, when Dr. Robinson showed from actual observations at Suez that the Bible account of the division of the Red Sea "by a strong east wind"* was so completely in accordance with the existing conformation of the channel and shores that the like cause might still produce the like effect, he was held censurable for thus bringing into clear light that "strong east wind" which the orthodox asserters of a miracle were accustomed

* Exodus xiv. 21.

to ignore; though it might have occurred to them that this miracle was hindering them and us from seeing in the story the key to such events as the destruction of Napoleon's army and subsequent power by the unusually early but not miraculous winter in Russia. And thus we are to profess a verbal belief that the Old Testament is the Revelation of God and is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" — but it is not permitted us to apply this belief in our study of history and in our political conduct until we too can show miracles like those of Moses and Joshua. If the sacred narrative is only providential we are to believe that it reveals in the particular event the universal law by which God governs all like events, and by which He would have us interpret any of these which we meet with in books or in life; but if we come to a miracle the veil immediately falls upon the meaning of the fact, and when we have to judge of the conduct of others, or to decide on our own, in corresponding events, we are left to the

maxims of a worldly, godless, policy because the Bible is silent. The reader knows that this is no unfair statement of the way in which our orthodox notions about the miracles of the Old Testament are making them useless to us. We are constantly drawn to the book by the deep humanity no less than divinity of every page: we feel that the nation it tells of were thoroughly of our own kind; that their needs and aspirations and sympathies are our own, and this the more heartily the deeper we go down; that their God is our God and that all manly wisdom goodness and energy, in our houses and in our market-places, in our senates and our armies, are and must be inspired and sustained by Him now for us, just as it was then for them: — and then we find in a moment that the vision is shut out from our eyes, and its realities torn from our hands, by the orthodoxy which compels us to admit that there is an impassable line of separation between us and a race which from the cradle to the grave was encircled with prodigies, and which lived and moved less upon this common earth of ours than in the to us unintelligible regions of a miraculous system.

But what is the remedy? Why do I speak of our orthodox notions about the miracles? Do I mean to deny, or evade, the fact that the miracles are in the book itself and not invented by the commentators?

Many of the miracles *are* the invention of the commentators; and over the rest they have shed a lurid magical glare which is never found in their text: and it is important to notice how habitually the rationalist critics have adopted these "rabbinical dotages" (as Coleridge calls them) and made them the excuse for their scepticism as the others have for their superstition. But we shall understand, as far as we need understand, both classes of errors better by looking not at them but at what a really rational and religious examination of the text itself brings us to. And towards such an examination I offer the following hints.

The comparative anatomy of the inferior animals throws light on the structure of the highest organisations; and we may find it neither useless nor profane to compare the first books of other nations with those of the Hebrews. Among the many analogies which exist between

the childhood of the race and of the individual, and which characterise the early literature of Greece, Rome, England, and every other nation worthy the name, we find the sensibility and the activity of the imaginative faculties much greater than in our own age; while there is a corresponding non-development of those reasoning and discriminating powers of the intellect which predominate so much in what we have apparently a right to call the manhood of our race. And we see that many things which we can only understand by help of our reasoning powers, and when these have been trained by much right use, were apprehended more or less intuitively by the men of former times by a force of imagination and feeling which we cannot realise in ourselves, though we can see that it is no fiction but an historical fact that they had it. Truth was to them, as it is to children now, a sentiment and not a science; and though it must be our own fault if our knowledge, being science and not feeling, is not more profound as well as more accurate than theirs, we shall assuredly prove the maturity of our own wisdom by the degree in which we can appre-

ciate the reality of theirs. Müller observes that the Greek myths were the fruit of habits of thought and feeling so entirely different from those of our times that it is very difficult for us to discover their meaning, and still more to conceive how they could have arisen and assumed their existing forms: but he proceeds to show (as has also been shown by others) that this difficulty may be at least in great part overcome, and the meaning of the myths reached, by those who will recognise the spirit of genuine religion under those poetical forms, and see how they did embody for the childlike fancy and imagination of the early Greeks this or that truth of religion in the very shape which best suited their then stage of mental development, and which was to them a truer and more intelligible way of expressing it than any of those which now seem so much more suitable, and indeed are much more so to us. And this I venture to assert is the method of positive science in reference to the subject here treated; for the authority of a name not less great for genius and learning than Müller's cannot convince me of the opposite doctrine — that the cur-

tain cannot be drawn from the picture because it is itself the picture, and that the gradual dying out of the religious belief of the Greeks was the natural decay of a mere, though honest, superstition.

In the infancy of nations every thing without and within a man spoke to him of a God, and of a spiritual action of that God on himself with which he felt an answering sympathy. Day and Night, Life and Death, Sleep and Dreams, Health and Sickness, were gods or came from gods: the River and the Tree, and much more the City and the Home, the Family and the Nation, were under the care of divine guardians: if a hero was distinguished above his fellows some god had given him his special endowments for war or government, and did this, not once for all, but by being always at hand to check his passions and to prompt his understanding and his tongue in the council, or to give his weapons a more than earthly temper and his arm a more than human force in the battle. The childlike minds which saw with intuitive faith and wisdom that such things were true in *idea* took for granted that the

poetical legends in which their exuberant imaginations embodied them were historical facts. They were simple and honest, and therefore did not imagine that many of such miraculous events had happened to themselves; but they put no limits to their belief of their occurrence to others, for they knew nothing of critical doubt and difficulties nor of the invariable laws and operations of nature, and miracles — that is direct communications between God and man — seemed to them the most obvious and natural of all things. But by degrees the logical faculties grew stronger, and the imaginative became subordinate to them: more and more of the assumed facts in which the early religious belief had embodied itself were proved by inexorable logic to be no facts, till at last absolutely none remained for the consistent reasoner. The progress of decay is ably traced by Mr. Grote; but while it is hardly possible for a believer in the Christian faith to read the account and not hear an under-voice repeating *mutato nomine de te fabula narratur*, this should but confirm him in the conviction that the faith of the Greeks had some reality, and

that it perished, not because it was a mere superstition wholly invented *ab extra*, but because though its spirit was real its facts were not so, and the spirit could not live without a body. Socrates shows that he felt the matter to stand thus: his practical piety realised the absolute necessity to his spirit of a personal present God; but his logic taught him that the only personal deities he knew, or could know of, would turn out to be creations of poets if the proofs of their existence were looked into too narrowly; and therefore in his own practice, and in his discourses with his disciples, he shrank from such investigations and advised them to do so. And this is the difference between the Christian and other faiths. The development and increased accuracy of our critical faculties has compelled us too to give up the miracles which the fathers of our English Church, the Augustines and the Bedes, honestly believed to be not only true but an essential part of their Christian faith: but we have found that they are not essential but can be completely separated and eliminated, not only without injury but with advantage to the reality of our

religion. God the Creator and Father, Jehovah Lord of hosts, Jesus Christ the Redeemer, the Holy Ghost the Comforter and the Sanctifier, are as real, as actual, as much the personal objects of personal trust and worship to us, as they were to our forefathers: and they have not grown dim, they are not about to vanish, as Socrates feared that Jupiter and Apollo and Eros and Esculapius must vanish, and as they did vanish on the dispersion of the surrounding mists of human imagination. God has revealed Himself to us in Christ who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and whatever opinions or beliefs may, age after age, have to be added to the number of those childish things which the Apostle — reckoning prophecies and miracles* among them — says shall cease and vanish away, in Christ there is no change. And before the coming of Christ in the flesh He was made known to the Hebrews as the invisible Lord and King of their nation; but this revelation was made to them alone, while (for the carrying out of God's plans of the universe) all other

* 1 Corinth. xiii. 8—11. compared with chap. xii. 28—30.

nations were left, as St. Paul tells the Athenians, to seek the Lord if haply they might feel after Him and find Him. Certain helps those nations had, but not a Revelation, an actual communication from God to them; and when the experiment had been fully worked out the final extinction of that faith which had once been not an honest superstition but a real religion (which as Müller says he who cannot discern has had Moses and the Prophets in vain) proved for all times that man cannot know his Creator aright unless He first makes Himself known to him.

And the Bible is nothing more nor less than the record of this communication of God to man. If it did not report to us what God has really spoken to us in sundry times and divers manners by the prophets in old times, and in the last days by a Son, it would not be a Revelation though it were written by an archangel, free from all trace of error moral or intellectual, and verified by all conceivable miracles: and since it does tell us this, it would not lose its character nor cease to be the Word of God though it were shown that the human instru-

ments through whom it was uttered were never so deficient in capacity, and coloured their report with never so much of their own credulity, prejudices, and weakness. But in fact the book has neither the one nor the other character, but just that properly human excellence without verbal or intellectual infallibility which more or less distinguishes the few books of permanent value in the literature of every nation. The writers of the Bible were, happily for us who need—not to carry about and idolise but —to mark learn and inwardly digest their books, men raised above the vulgar prejudices and superstitions of the unthinking crowd about them, but not above the passions and infirmities, the limited knowledge and even the imperfectly developed morality, of the wisest and best men of their own age and country. They were the Homers the Herodotuses and the Platos, the Dantes the Shakspeares the Miltons the Burkes and the Coleridges, of Israel; and we should look well, and ask ourselves strictly, whether we are honouring God who has made man in His own image, or whether we are adopting a vulgar

superstition, if we suppose them to have been something else than this.

I have thus endeavoured to indicate the method which it seems to me must be followed in the present day if we would enter into the meaning now almost lost of large portions of the Old Testament, and would realise as our fathers did that it is a revelation of light to our reason, and not a pagan-like oracle growing ever more dumb though its votaries increase their superstitious devotions never so much. And thus we shall come to the conclusion that the same disregard of critical and logical accuracy and of the consideration that nature is governed by fixed laws, the same intuitive recognition of the spirit and meaning and essential truth of the traditions which they collect and record with such wondrous art, and consequently the same childlike belief that man's life is a perpetual miracle and interference of God with nature on his behalf, are to be found—in kind though for the most part with great superiority of form—in the earliest books of the Bible as in all other national literatures: that by degrees a change

takes place in the one as in the others, so that as the Hebrew intellect and character reach their maturity in the writings of a David a Solomon or an Isaiah * there is a silent perhaps unconscious abandonment of any expectation of miraculous suspensions of the laws of nature for themselves and their own times, though they retain a hearty sympathy with the history of their fathers and a deliberate belief, and practice based on the belief, that God is no less present and active among them, though under the forms of ordinary human and natural existence, than He was when He walked with Abraham or led Israel through the Wilderness: and that finally when the Hebrew like all other literatures declines with the decay of the nation, we can perceive the scholastic formal character of mind which belongs to such periods, and which ex-

* Isaiah's offer of a "sign" to Ahaz "either in the depth or the height above" may seem to contradict this statement: but (as I have shown in my *Hebrew Politics*, chapters vi. and xxi.) this was said in a moment of prophetic ecstasy or enthusiasm, and practically retracted by the character of the signs which he did give on this and all other occasions.

hibits that feature with which we have here to do in a certain dry orthodox mode of interpreting the imaginative language of poets and prophets in the most literal manner, and defining predictions and miracles where they had seen only the living Word and Hand of the Lord :— as in the instances of the cotemporary and subsequent accounts of the sign of Hezekiah's recovery*, and of the calculations of the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years of exile in the Chronicles and Book of Daniel. But it will be our own fault, and the sign that our intellects are darkened by a superficial unreflecting scepticism, if we do not perceive that these several phases of the Hebrew mind are all of them honest healthful and truthful in their kind ; or if we overlook the differences while we recognise the resemblances between the Hebrew and other literatures and especially that severe simplicity, that historical rather than poetical or philosophical tendency, and that spiritually religious character which pervade the Jewish Book, and all which combined to make it the

* See *Hebrew Politics*, p. 287.

fit channel for that Revelation of God to man which because it is spiritual and addressed directly to man's spirit can of necessity only be seen — like all other spiritual realities — in its vital results, and not in itself.

CHAPTER III.

Application of the method to particulars. — The Bible text. — Astronomy. — Creation of the world. — Geology. — Ethnology. Adam and Eve. — The Temptation. — The Fall. — Confusion of tongues. — Early historical books. — The sun and moon standing still. — Relation of Hebrew miracles to modern history.

I NOW proceed to give a few instances illustrative of the method proposed in the last chapter.

The first step of a positive Biblical criticism has been some time permanently secured. We protestants at least have, after much painful dread lest we were surrendering one of the defences of the Bible, given up the notion that an infallible text, and still more that an infallible version, of the Bible exists. We have come to admit that there has been no miraculous suspension of the natural laws which govern the copying of manuscripts, nor miraculous protection of the sacred text from the errors to

which all other books have been subject: and as usual this submission to the facts which declared God's wisdom to be contrary to our theories in the matter has brought us into light where we feared darkness. For it has enabled us to see (what is more interesting than a miraculously perfect text could be) that the book we have has been preserved to us sufficiently for all practical uses, by those ordinary laws of God's providence to which we ourselves are subject: and by thus setting us free from the grossest, though not the most dangerous, form of bibliolatry, it has encouraged us to go forward in the same path, and to apply the same method of honest though reverent inquiry to all other branches of the subject.

And what may be taken as finally done as to the verbal character of the Bible, is doing as to its scientific and historical character; and with the like happy religious results to those who are not afraid to face the truth. We have ceased to maintain the scientific accuracy of the Bible when it asserts that the sun goes round the earth; nor do we argue that when the writers spoke of the rising and setting sun they used the words, as

we do now, with the knowledge that they were popular and not astronomical. For we are content to see that the popular phraseology is still retained among the most accurate thinkers and speakers because it has a natural and human—though not a scientific—propriety; and that it always will be, as it always has been, the right way for men living and moving in a world of sensible phenomena to speak of this phenomenon as it does appear to their senses. Yet it is no vulgar, but a profoundly rational, use which the writer of the first chapter of Genesis makes of his observation of the heavenly bodies. He sees no less meaning for his purposes than the modern astronomer does for his in "that grand phenomenon, the most important beyond all comparison which nature presents, the daily rising and setting of the sun and stars, their progress through the vault of the heavens, and their return to the same apparent places at the same hours of the day and night." * But while the latter here recognises "the first instance of that great law of periodicity which pervades all astronomy," and from the consideration of

* Herschel's *Outlines of Astronomy*, § 55.

which the student is to be led on to the other laws and facts of the science, the former proceeds to combine the idea of political with that of physical order, and so makes the creation suggest not only the Creator but the Lord and King of men, which is just what revelation has to do. Without dogmatising on the vexed question of the authorship of the Book of Genesis, or denying that the first chapter may be older than the second in its existing shape, we may perhaps say that no one before Moses, and only some man of Moses-like intellect and training in any age of Hebrew history, could have been capable of such a mature conception as the former. The second chapter probably preserves to us the main patriarchal tradition on the subject, but Moses learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and endowed with that rare political genius which in a very few instances in the history of the world has qualified a man to be the founder of a nation, would have felt that something more was needed to be known of the law and order of creation; and it would have been — we may see it was — in meditating upon the order of political society that the vision rose

before him. The Hebrew shepherds of Palestine watching their flocks under a cloudless sky may have known the weekly division of time, which has been found among the American Indians as well as the ancient Egyptians and Romans, and which has been traced with reason to the observation of the changes which we call the quarters of the moon* — one of the several ways in which the heavenly bodies were "for signs and for seasons and for days and for years." But there was no occasion for setting apart the seventh day of each week either for rest or for worship in a state of life in which the work and business of no day was such as could interfere with either; and if we suppose any tradition on the subject we must suppose it unrealised by formal acts before the time when men began to devote themselves to the hard labour of agriculture, and to the incessant activity and bustle of trade and other city occupations. Then first are regular intervals of bodily and spiritual repose essential to healthful existence; and the Hebrew lawgiver alone of legislators not themselves taught from him un-

* Ideler, quoted by Winer, *Realwörterbuch*, art. *Woche*.

derstood this demand, and met it by his various political enactments of which the weekly Sabbath was the chief. And thus the true relation of human work and rest, and the way in which man who is the image of God frames by means of these the constitution and order of human society, being rightly known, they became the mirror in which the mystery of the works of God himself was reflected and made clear to the eye of the Seer.

And while the Bible thus infuses a moral life into the discoveries of astronomy, these on the other hand have given a meaning to it which men in more imaginative ages could realise in spite of their false science, but which we must get at by help of true science or not at all. Nay, when we read and obtain the clue from Solomon's "Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee," or David's "When I consider thy heavens the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him," we may see more than they could in their words. For the laws of the heavenly bodies suggest to us thoughts of the Creator which David could

not get from their appearances: and the astronomical fact of the immensity of space delivers us, as Solomon could not be delivered, from all materialistic notions of the abode of God being an invisible place. And then Geology comes in to rid us of the no less really, though not so obviously, unphilosophical and unspiritual notion, that eternity is endless time: for it shows us what endless time is in the concrete, and so clears our minds as no abstract reasonings do.

While we admit that the author of the first chapter of Genesis was ignorant of scientific geology, we may assert that his ignorance of it was one of his qualifications for the nobler task he was employed on. That chapter, just as it stands, does reveal to us, in words the most exactly fitted for their purpose, the fact that God—the Lord of the Hebrew by the covenant of circumcision, and our Father by the washing of regeneration—did in the beginning create the heavens and the earth. The cosmogonies of India, Egypt, or Greece, are hardly less capable of taking the place of this record of creation than the most scientific treatise on geology could be. Take any existing treatise, or imagine one con-

centrating all possible science in itself, and then ask what it would have been, what it could be in any age past or to come, as a substitute for this. With the revelation in our hands and our hearts, every discovery of physical science is full of meaning and interest. We can understand the scientific geologist when he tells us that "no satisfactory proof has yet been discovered of the gradual passage of the earth from a chaotic to a more habitable state, nor of any law of progressive development" (such as the theory of "Vestiges of Creation" supposes), but that the evidence goes to show that the long and orderly series of geological periods is characterised by original creations of plants and animals each with its own species, and not by gradual elevations in the scale of being; and that the very recent introduction of man into the world was accompanied with "new and extraordinary circumstances, andthose not of a *physical* but a *moral* nature"—seeing that "the distinctness of the human from all other species, considered merely as an efficient cause in the physical world, is real; for we stand in a relation to contemporary species of animals and

plants widely different from that which other irrational animals can ever be supposed to have held to each other : we modify their instincts, relative numbers, and geographical distribution, in a manner superior in degree, and in some respects very different in kind from that in which any other species can affect the rest." * We can understand these things because long before we had heard of any of them we had listened and learnt with the peasants and children of Judea, and of all other lands where this book has come, that God created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh ; that He endowed all plants and animals with a law of life and reproduction, each after its kind ; and at last appointed man not only like these to replenish but also to subdue the earth, and not only gave him their natural capacities and powers, but also created him in His own image. But let us reverse the case : let us conceive a strictly scientific statement substituted for the first chapter of Genesis, and I think we shall see that the substitute would not and could

* Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, 9th Edition, pp. 146. 152, 153.

not be a revelation. Men and men's minds being what they are, the language of science is not found always adequate even for the trained student, and even he often gains clearness of view from lively and picturesque appeals to his imagination *: and still more would there have been a positive unfitness in the miraculous use of the scientific phraseology by the writers of the Bible, which would so far have lost its character of a revelation to ordinary men women and children, and which does so far prove its right to the name by its freedom from such pedantry. These require to be taught in the universal language of ordinary human thought and feeling, as the only fit or even possible vehicle for communicating to them the subject of revelation, even though the theme be so far above ordinary human conception or expression that it must be uttered in parables, apologues, or statements of facts never so inadequate or imperfect. And this Bible account of creation does still as it always has done approve itself as the universal language of hu-

* Herschel's *Outlines of Astronomy*, § 9. The scientific works of Sir C. Lyell and Mr. J. S. Mill are eloquent commentaries on this doctrine.

manity no less than of sound theology. But opposites need not be contraries, and instead of Science or Revelation having to destroy the other in order to find room for itself the two are in real harmony, and have each its appointed way of supporting and illustrating the other in God's universal wisdom : and thus by their double light we discern the meaning at once religious and scientific of many a thought and word which our fathers rather felt than understood.

Ethnology again has at once compelled us to lay aside other instances of superstitious reverence for the letter and has helped us to a clearer understanding of the meaning instead. The scientific establishment of the unity of the human species, and ascertainment of the laws which have distributed the various races over the earth, are matters of no small interest to the Christian whose faith and hopes for mankind through a common Saviour must be bound up with the belief that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of

their habitation: "* but the interest is heightened by the fact that one of the main proofs of this unity is found by the scientific ethnographer in the capacity of all every where to repent and believe on the name of the man Jesus Christ. Such is the use to which Dr. Pritchard turns missionary reports: and there can be little if any doubt that it was his personal Christian faith which directed him to the principle of those ethnological investigations which are known throughout Europe for their severely scientific character, and his conclusions from which are every day confirmed by the further inquiries of those who have followed him. And no thoughtful yet scrupulous student of the Bible can have felt it other than the greatest relief and help to find that one, whose reverence for the letter of Scripture was such that he suspended his judgment for years on the subject of the ages of the antediluvian patriarchs, as he did on some other points, does at the end of his great work declare that the duration of human life could never have been such as is there stated, for then it would not have been human — not

* Acts, xvii. 26.

of the same kind as our own. I say it is a help and relief, because the statement that these patriarchs lived each for many centuries, while they yet left no record of having done anything beyond existing and dying, had really ceased to have any meaning from the time that we were no longer able to fill the blank with imaginary pictures of a wisdom and goodness and power corresponding to their longevity, as our fathers could do without being disturbed by any questionings how all this could have left no trace of itself behind: and having no meaning itself it marred the meaning of all that came before and after in the book. But now that we can give it up, not on grounds which might seem only probable but for a positive scientific reason, we are more than compensated — say rather the character of the book is more than compensated — by other considerations which seem to follow. For the matter of fact simplicity of those who preserved the tradition, without being tempted, as Greek or Gothic mythologists would have been, to fill up the lives of their heroes with imaginary events, encourages us the rather to trust them where they narrate

the human fortunes of an Abraham or a Joseph: while the general correspondence between the extent of time covered by these genealogies and that which the independent investigations of geologists ethnographers and historians think most probably required for the period of man's existence and the origin of nations, may one day be found to have a value not yet ascertained.

The poetry of Isaiah and Ezekiel, and in modern times that of Milton, the pictures of the great painters, the classical and Oriental mythologies, and that universal tendency which these illustrate to imagine the original state of mankind as one of marvellous and magical excellence, have furnished the multitude of unreflecting commentators, from the Rabbis downwards, with ample means as well as inclination for disfiguring the second and third chapters of Genesis. But if we turn from them and from the sceptical critics who as usual assume their predecessors' figments to be a part of the text, and look at the text itself, we find nothing of the sort, but the simplest possible account of what reason history and modern science seem

to agree in indicating to us as the condition of the first parents of the human race. The "ourang-outang theory," revived in our own day only to be set aside as unscientific, has given way to the more probable conclusion that though civilised nations have all reached that state through long cultivation yet savage tribes are no less really degenerated, and that the starting-point in each direction has been some comparatively simple infantine condition of mankind. The scholastic dogmas on original sin are giving place to the more intelligible as well as more Christian doctrine that all sinful acts are the fruits of an antecedent peccability in the human, and because human peccable, will; and that this must have been no less true of the first than of every other man, though he was free from all those artificial temptations to fall which the sinning of successive ages has been accumulating ever since about us, though not without a corresponding accumulation of aids and defences against them. And just such an account of the first man and woman as these and the like considerations would lead us to believe the true one, do we in fact find in these

chapters. The story has the same character as that of the Greek myths inasmuch as it is the embodiment of an important idea in the form of history; and the childlike simplicity of thought and word no less than of religious faith plainly indicates that the Hebrew author stands at a like period of human development with that of Homer or the makers of the old Roman ballads. The question remains whether in the Hebrew, as in the Greek and Roman case, the exuberance of the author's imagination has obliterated all distinction between poetry and fact, or whether the facts which can hardly be guessed at in the classical cases are in the Hebrew cognisable as a coherent narrative of actual events:—whether in short those chapters of Genesis only give us a poetical picture of what must have happened, or an historical relation of what did happen. And it is perhaps one of those many questions which will ever receive opposite answers from the opposite classes of minds one of which finds it easier, and the other harder, to conceive ideas apart from facts, and is accordingly predisposed or indisposed to accept with favour such imperfect

evidence as alone exists in this case. I content myself with observing that the account is either that which had actually come down by tradition from Adam with so much of the mythical tone and colouring as it would have inevitably acquired during the transmission, or it is a perfectly just conception of what such an account would have been, realised for us by a master-mind. The greater parts of the details are highly allegorical; but it may be fairly asked whether the actual life of the parents of mankind would not be inevitably archetypal and representative of that of their descendants: and the failure of all attempts to find a tenable allegorical sense in the four rivers of Eden says more for the historical character of the story than the equal failure to give them a true geographical position does against it. For nothing is more natural than that confusion and error should have crept into a list of proper names preserved by tradition in a country and to a period remote from those of which it told: nor is it unimportant to observe that ethnographical indications point to the regions near the sources of the Euphrates and Tigris as the

probable cradle of our race. The story itself, fairly translated from the true and beautiful language of primeval man into the less beautiful and not truer phraseology of our own day, stands thus: — God created the first man out of the dust, as was learnt when the first occurrence of death dissolved the body into its elements. He had abundant fruit for his daily food, but one tree because the fruit was either unripe or unwholesome he was forbidden to touch till his childish intelligence was able to judge of its fitness: — the "discerning between good and evil" being as we know the ordinary Hebrew phrase for the having passed from childishness into what we, more briefly, call the age of discretion. Whether the expressions "the Lord said" and "the Lord commanded" are to be understood here, as in the prophets, of the Divine Word addressing itself immediately to the heart and mind, and explaining itself by ordinary outward occurrences, or whether reason requires us to suppose that the original man must have been instructed outwardly as well as inwardly by God himself, and whether in this instance the command was

signified otherwise than through Adam's observation and experience that the one fruit was unwholesome and the other wholesome, I do not venture to decide. But if we are to understand only the former I think no one who has gone along with me hitherto will find any difficulty in reconciling this conclusion with the assertion that the words are the best possible for expressing the truth, and that their writer was not hindered but qualified to use them rightly because his childlike belief that God walked visibly in the garden was undisturbed either by our doubts or our solutions of them. The infant-minded Adam begins to feel the innate longing of the human heart for association and sympathy, and he (or the writer of his history) rightly saw in that longing the antecedent law of his nature whence it originated, and which was itself the Fiat, the "Inspoken Word," of the Creator of man. The beasts and birds cannot satisfy the want though they supply the means of teaching the child to speak as they do with our children still. He then falls asleep, and in his sleep has an explanation—allegorical or actual we may decide when we

have found our faculties competent to grasp any idea of creative action — of the fact that the woman whom he finds in waking is the being of his own kind, the help-meet, he has hitherto longed for in vain. She is as infantine as himself in mind, whatever may have been their stature: she sees a snake eating the forbidden apples, and with an untrained childishness (reminding us of the man who when he recovered his sight could not till after some experience realise that the objects did not all touch his eyes) she confounds her own desire to eat also, and the arguments which suggest themselves in favour of yielding to the temptation, with the movements and sounds of the serpent, and imagines that he is speaking to her, though it will be observed that when this silly child is no longer the narrator (or supposed narrator) of what she saw and heard when alone, the serpent no longer possesses the power of speech. She and her husband eat: they must have been the merest children in intellect and character to have been unable to resist the temptation of an apple, but it is just in some such unimportant act that the first sin of each of us, the first

consent of the human will to debase itself by gratifying the flesh in spite of a law of God to the contrary, is committed at some unknown period of our infancy. And the marked triviality of their first temptation does but assert the more clearly the previous peccability of each of them, and reveal the more clearly the peccability — the original sin, the universal human defect — in each of us.

The known history of our own and other languages had made it so impossible to maintain the literal accuracy of the account of the origin of languages in the confusion of tongues at Babel, that the most orthodox commentators were endeavouring to find some ingenious explanation; and either by that, or by their despairing silence, compelling us to confess that here too was another portion of the Bible which we might insist on calling inspired, but which had no meaning, still less any revelation, for us —when ethnology came to our help. It reasserted that all languages were derived from one another by long and natural processes, as we knew English was formed from Anglo-Saxon and French or Italian from Latin: but it added

the information that there was a frequent and wide-spread degradation of languages, which followed the moral and intellectual degradation of the branches of a race when these separated from its civilised trunk and fell away to savage life. Thus for instance the greater part of the languages of Africa, though the vocabularies sometimes contain no words in common, have by the aid of science been discovered to have a common affinity to the language of the Egyptians: for the grammatical marks remain though the words were lost along with the moral and intellectual ideas to which they belonged in Egypt, and along with which they were abandoned by the men who in an unknown antiquity left their civilised home to become the founders of wild and barbarous hordes in the deserts. And knowing this we see at once the meaning, the revelation, of that unintelligible and incredible story of the confusion of tongues. It may yet need much investigation and discussion to decide whether it be an historical fact or a parable; but in either case it reveals to us the divine, the spiritual, law which God has in all times laid as the foundation—the *lex legum*—

of these natural laws of the division of races and languages; and it leads us to see new reason why the gift of tongues in the day of Pentecost was the appropriate sign of the setting up upon earth of a universal Society and Brotherhood into which all men even the most degraded were invited to come.

I must here leave the reader to make the further application of the method for himself, only adding a few words on the early historical books. These have the same legendary tone and colouring, and yet the same historical coherence and sobriety, as I have noticed in Genesis. The men are real men not as Homer's but as Livy's or Bede's are, though they live and move less in the light of common day than in the glory of a visible Divine Presence and Guidance the literal belief in which seems, as I have said, open to the objections alleged against the Romish doctrine of standing ecclesiastical miracles, although we trace no such wrong effect on the minds of the Bible writers, or of those who at any time past or present have been or still are able to read them with the same childlike faith as indited

them. For to all such minds these books declare, and declare because they first reveal and that in the aptest possible form, what was and is God's actual method of founding guiding and governing nations in the least as well as in the greatest things. Nor is their legendary form of thought and word really less fitted for nineteenth-century philosophers than for peasants, and children, though it may seem to be so for a time. The philosopher and the man of letters have the common human heart—neither better nor worse—of their less intellectual brothers, and to them as to these a large part of their best wisdom must come through the faculties of imagination and feeling, or not at all. The man of mature years and mind enjoys the Iliad and Odyssey or the first books of Livy not less but more than the schoolboy can, and this because he sees as the other cannot how true they are: and in like manner the more the Christian man learns to add knowledge to his faith the more will he and does he find that these early books of the Bible are written in exactly the form which is truest and most instructive for him as well as for the uneducated, though he does not suppose

his reason or his faith to be in any bondage to their letter—or rather to the letter of their commentators. How these Hebrew narratives grew up from oral traditions and popular songs the poetical imagery of which the traditions translated into historical statements, we see plainly in the story of Joshua commanding the sun and moon to stand still, for in giving this the simple Herodotus-like historian has, fortunately for us, both told us his authority and quoted its very words. From this we learn that he had found this incident in one of the national ballads in the collection of Jasher, and had introduced it into his narrative as a note-worthy fact. And we, comparing it with other specimens of the wonted hyperbole of the Hebrew poets, see at once that it was a poet's language to describe the completeness of the rout and the length of pursuit assisted by a fine day and night, in a climate where weather is an element of essential importance to a battle.

I shall have failed in conveying my meaning to the reader if I now leave him with any impression that I have been attempting to apologise for the miracles of the Old Testament, and to

show that the book is substantially valuable in spite of their presence. For the point that I am anxious to insist on is, that it is not in spite but because of their presence that the book is the Revelation our Christian faith holds it to be, and this not the less but the more because I understand these miracles according to the method I have explained. My endeavour has been to find the strongest words in which to assert not that there were no miracles then because there are none now, but that the God who "wrought His signs in Egypt and His wonders in the field of Zoan" is still alive, and present, and working the like signs and wonders among us, and that in order to see and understand these we must rightly believe and enter into the spirit of that record of His ancient works in Israel in which alone the mystery and method of them is set forth.

CHAPTER IV.

Objections. — The old doubt recurs. —Scepticism. — Powers of real investigation vary with individual minds. — Man and knowledge twofold, personal and social. —New truths originate with the individual.—Free discussion not dangerous.— Scepticism not kept out by articles and bibliolatry. — Our political freedom and spiritual despotism.—Science will establish the faith in Christ more firmly than ever.

Let us now consider certain objections which are likely to be raised to the views of the preceding chapters. I begin with that of him who, after hearing all that I or others abler than I can say in defence of the New Testament miracles, may reply that this reasoning seems satisfactory as long as he keeps his mind in a merely reasoning attitude; but that directly he asks himself, "But did the thing actually happen after all," the old difficulty — the "incurable scepticism" the mere name of which Gibbon thought answer enough for the best authenticated miracle, — comes back with all its first force. I confess that I myself feel the

difficulty, the doubt returning as often as it is repulsed, as painfully as any man can do: and while I admit for some individuals the expediency as well as the possibility of keeping it more or less out of sight by the activities of practical life (according to the advice which the old clergyman gave to the young one who had doubts about the Trinity, that he should take a large parish), I agree that for others not this but the deliberate facing the doubts is at once the only possible, and the only honest, course: and that to him who does thus face them, they come with a force which could not have been felt by our fathers, whose minds were not trained to our clear recognition of the universal and invariable laws of nature. As often as we attempt to bring our facts, or rather our fact-recognising power, and our logic together we find ourselves on the brink of a gulf — of a μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος — which we cannot leap as they could. Yet if we look again, we shall see that if modern science has increased the difficulty it has also supplied a better aid than the old unscientific temper for meeting it.

Some positive philosophers, as M. Hum-

boldt and M. Comte, peremptorily decline to inquire into the question of *Origins*, as being among the mysteries which natural science, the science of sequences, cannot reach. A plain man might ask whether, if this be so, positive philosophy is not using the phrase "all the facts" in a merely technical and professional sense which signifies "certain classes of facts to the exclusion of others;" but happily we need not quarrel with science on this ground. For Sir Charles Lyell, who stands in the first rank of physical science, while he occupies no ordinary position as a social philosopher and a man of letters, tells us* that to Geology these topics, of the origin of beings and the possibility of so astonishing a phenomenon as that of new species called into being from time to time, do strictly appertain: and he then proceeds to investigate in the ordinary scientific method this question which, I need hardly observe, demands an intellectual capacity and attitude exactly analogous to that which is required of him who proposes to himself the inquiry whether the miracles of our Lord stand

* *Principles of Geology*, 9th Edition, p. 704.

in any real and conceivable relation with the ordinary laws of nature.

Niebuhr's method again was strictly scientific, though like every one else he sometimes mistook notions for facts in his application of it; and he not only considered the origin of civilisation a subject of human interest, but held that it was to be best explained by "some immediate inspiration" and instruction in the domestic and social arts.* And Dr. Pritchard, who maintains the unity while Niebuhr held the original diversity of mankind, points out the belief of so many races in all parts of the world, that civilisation had been brought to each of them by some foreign conqueror or visitor, and (if I rightly apprehend his argument) indicates the Hebrew people and the revelation they had received from God as the first source of the civilisation thus widely spread.†

But above all I must appeal once more to the reader's own consciousness and observation

* Lieber's *Reminiscences of Niebuhr*, p. 25.

† *Physical History of Mankind.* I must refer the reader to the general arguments and conclusions of the work, not to particular passages.

of the facts of his human, as distinct from his animal, existence. Birth and Death, not of the animal produced or annihilated under the laws of animal life but of the immortal spirit entering into or passing out of this world, are true miracles to him who has an eye to see them, though they happen daily and hourly before us. Nor does the growth of that new life of relations between man and wife, or parent and child, from which the animal bond is as distinct as the shadow from its substance, deserve the name of miracle much less. I do not pretend to argue with him to whom none of these facts are known: but I confidently appeal to him who does know them whether they do not afford a sufficient analogy with the miracles recorded as the acts of One who is God as well as man, to enable him to pause before he takes for granted with Gibbon that the sceptical difficulty which he feels in even admitting their possibility or conceivableness is of itself a conclusive argument.

And then, though I grant nay protest that the more honest course for the man who has doubts is to face them, I would beg the reader to consider well whether what is honest for him

or for me is therefore of necessity good in itself? Is not scepticism, curable or incurable, a curable or incurable disease of the mind, and to be treated accordingly? It may have been no merit to our fathers that they did not feel our doubts, nay it may be true that our doubts are but the inheritance of their over-confidence, as the hard-drinking fox-hunter may transmit to his son the consumption which never touched himself: it may be that the "practical man" of our own day is not only grossly credulous, but the cause, through reaction, of scepticism in others: but let us look at the facts, not at the moral merits, and then say whether scepticism is in itself a more manly and healthy state of mind than credulity. Scepticism enables us to see several sides of a matter where "practical men" see only one, to be eclectics where they are partisans, and to look down on their attacks and defences of what we discern to be one object, with the calmness of Epicurean gods: but it gives us this knowledge only in paralysing at least our practical powers of duty, and often our moral sense too. Whether in politics or in trade, in social or in domestic life, the man

who suspects every thing and every body inevitably exhibits this paralysis, and incapacity for healthy action, unless he substitutes the no less diseased energy of selfishness. The sceptic may be a Hamlet — "in apprehension how like a god;" or a Pendennis, too flabby for a boy and too shallow for a man; but the disease shows itself the same in both. And lastly, in religion, scepticism not only gives us a metaphysical Theism or Atheism, the idea of the Infinite in humanity or the worship of the Goddess Humanity, instead of Jesus Christ; but it is the same spirit in disguise which leads such honest and holy men as we all know to advocate the lies and filth of working popery; to deprive their brethren of education or of permission to preach the Gospel unless they will subscribe thirty-nine written, or other unwritten, Articles to which not one in ten thousand of the imposers attaches any distinct meaning but which he hopes may bolster up a faith which his heart tells him is slipping from his grasp; or to entertain ingenious questions as to the limits within which a man may preach doctrines which he does not, or conceal those which he does,

believe without becoming a hypocrite first to others and then to himself.* Let me ask him to whom the Bible and Christ are still realities, whether when he has lost these his state of mind will not be certainly, utterly, diseased,—however logical, however honest, may have been each successive step of his course? I repeat that such a course may be honest; but its honesty will not make it the less evil in itself: I respect, and am not afraid to acknowledge as God's servants and martyrs, the men who have taken it because they felt it was honest and truthful so to do: but I will not therefore be induced either by logical consistency, or even by brotherly sympathy, to admit that the course itself is not wrong, and does not betoken an unhealthy state of mind. Their writings give ample evidence that if they start with a positive love of truth, it habitually degenerates into a

* Those Christians who deprecate frank statement and discussion of even what they admit to be truth as to the Bible, lest the Church should be injured, would do well to look at their own arguments as seen in the mirror Strauss holds up to them in the last section of his *Life of Jesus*. Strauss advocates exactly the same reserve towards the Church on the part of its ministers as they do, and for the same reasons.

negative and by no means critical hostility to what they take for error, and a hardly less negative substitution of some hypothetical opinion of what may be, for the actual knowledge of what is: and if they cannot see, and hold it for mere uncharitable bigotry in us to see, this difference between positive and negative, criticism and prejudice, opinion and fact, in spiritual things, I must consider their case as one of intellectual with at least a tendency to moral defect and disease. Such men — for I do not speak of those who disbelieve because they are not in earnest, or because belief would demand of them a new moral life, — are the victims of our superstitious orthodoxy: by misguidance in youth and persecution in manhood we have driven them on, step by step, till they have made and it was apparently their duty to make those fatal experiments on themselves which have thereby, and perhaps only thereby, become unnecessary for those who can learn truth by their errors.

But what is the remedy for this disease of scepticism? For the individual there may be, perhaps can be, no complete cure within the limits of his short life on earth; because he is a

member of a society which has an indefinitely prolonged and progressive existence, and of the defects and diseases of which at any given moment he must bear his share, whether he be actively or only passively co-operating with the other members in working out the remedies and the healthy growth in which also he shares with them. Healthy action is indeed more or less possible to the mind, though it may not be able entirely to shake off its scepticism thereby, nay though it should only maintain instead of advancing its position. But what is healthy mental action in each man, each must decide for himself from the indications of his own experience. Let him seek for the truth with as thorough disregard of consequences as Strauss himself can boast: let his conviction, that to him the question is not one of criticism but of life and death, impart all its earnestness, but no bias, to his search: but let him not forget that the failure of religious, prayerful, earnestness in such inquiry is a certain indication that diseased is superseding healthy action of the mind. For a man may begin thus earnestly, and yet presently find that his faith in Christ

and the Bible is giving way before his inquiries: and if he does so, he must look to the practical results. This faith is not an opinion formed by logical inference and comparison of probabilities, and which therefore must stand or fall as these may do, but trust in a Person and in that Person's communications of His will,—a fact, and not an opinion at all; and therefore any investigations which the individual finds hostile to his clear recognition of what he has already ascertained to be a fact, and a fact of vital importance, on grounds which transcend and are independent of logic, are certainly unhealthy for him, and can only lead him to error. He must admit that this is so only to him individually, and because of the antecedent weakness or other deficiencies of his mind; for neither logic nor criticism nor any other just operation of the intellect can really contradict facts, though many facts are beyond or beside their reach: but if a man sees clearly that by pursuing a certain line of investigation he shall arrive not at new truth, but merely at the denial of a truth he has already ascertained, he will show less love of truth than

aberration of conscience if he persists in that investigation. Truthfulness no more requires a man to destroy his faith unless he can prove its reality by logic than charity requires him to beggar himself and his wife and children in order to relieve the poor. In this as in every other human activity there must be a prudential consideration of what the limitations and deficiencies of human powers make possible to the individual. Beyond these limits he must be passive. Since scepticism is a disease he must in great part meet it by patient endurance while he abstains from all useless struggles to work himself into a more healthy state of mind, and instead carefully husbands such weak vital energies as still remain to him, and so waits quietly — as men wait in chronic diseases of the body — if perhaps an insensible action from within, working day and night he knows not how, may effect a cure from within where all external doctorings have proved worse than useless. And if the cure does not come in this way either — as it does not always — still patience through faith in Christ is the ultimate rule: the *end* may not be in this world, yet

"the vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

But as regards the Church, the body of believers, into which this scepticism is eating in every direction, the case presents other aspects, and suggests other arguments and objections, though such as have been in some degree anticipated in speaking of the individual.

Man is spiritually as well as naturally a twofold being, personal and social: he is a member of Christ and child of God, and also a member of the Church of Christ and Family of God; and therefore he has in things spiritual, as in things natural, a twofold means of learning truth. A man's stock of the knowledge and wisdom which relate to this life would be very poor if it were only what he had collected for himself, and not the accumulations of his race in all times and places; and on the other hand he is unable to make any worthy use of this heritage except in as far as the cultivation of his own mind qualifies him for the vital assimilation and reproduction, and not merely the retentive

possession or clever distribution, of these fruits of the universal human mind. And so it is with spiritual wisdom, which must be derived at once from the Christian's personal knowledge of God and of the mind of God, and from that accumulated and accumulating knowledge which is the common possession of the whole Church. But Truth is Truth before and above the Church: the faith of a Christian man is on the one hand personal trust in a divine and present Lord, with an affectionate reliance on His truth before we understand it; and on the other an actual apprehension by our intellectual faculties that this truth is real, and no less satisfying to our reason than to our heart; and hence it follows that all such notions as that "we must obey the Church though it should command us to believe that black is white" fall to the ground of themselves. They have simply no meaning when applied to the belief of Truth, for they stand in no relation to their subject matter, the fallacy being that an illustration (possibly useful as an illustration) taken from the obedient conduct which a soldier owes his officer, or a citizen his laws, has been turned into an argument which overlooks the

difference in kind between conduct and faith. Nor will any enlargement of the definition of the Church (which indeed I use in its widest and therefore properest sense of the whole body which holds Christ as its head) affect this subordination of the Church and its authority to that which is true in itself. But though no real seeker for truth will take the *dicta* of the Church as a substitute for it, he will (as I have already said) be aware that he will find little truth if he has not the wisdom of the whole body to help his own; and therefore he will always gladly listen to the teachings of the Church, and suspend his own judgment till he has fully informed and possessed himself of all that they offer him;—nay, the consciousness of the fallibility of his judgment even when most sustained and enlightened by the Holy Spirit will often cause him to continue that suspension, even when no examination of the particular teaching of the Church convinces him of its soundness.

Yet it is no less true of the spiritual than of each earthly society, that every new discovery and every new activity originates not with the society, but with some individual member of it

who anticipates in his own person the new want, and the necessity for satisfying it, somewhat before it is felt by the body at large. And if a member of the Church finds that he is vainly applying to her for help and guidance in any matter, he may be sure that this is the sign that it is his business in however small a degree to help her. For though the Church as a whole has a life of its own, which is indeed the Holy Ghost dwelling in it, yet it is not the less true that each member possesses the same life organically in himself; so that the life of the whole at once sustains and is sustained by the life of all the parts, derived by each directly from Christ himself "from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."* And therefore the least of us must not forget—he will deny the Spirit of Christ within him if he does not assert—that fallible and actually faulty as his judgment is he is himself directly taught of God, and not merely through the

* Ephesians, iv. 16.

medium of the Church; and that not only has he a voice as a member of the Church in her decisions, but also the power in virtue of God's direct teaching of himself to add something to the general stock of knowledge; and that his contribution cannot be so small (if he be indeed a Christian and derive his light from Christ) as that the Church can say "we have no need of it." Only we must take heed that we do always remember, and that not by verbal profession but by effective mental discipline, the faulty condition of our minds which have to receive and reflect the divine light, and how inevitably we distort and darken it in the transmission in ways and to an extent of which, from the nature of the case, we cannot be ourselves conscious at the time: so that while the most ignorant man has a right to believe that he can impart for the general profit any truth which he has had to find for himself because it was not already in the general stock, the wisest man is bound to remember that only by repeated examination and discussion, and the application of the various tests which time and God's providence supply, can the truth be sifted from the errors which

will undoubtedly be found mixed up with his ablest views and statements: and that till after this process is completed his are but private opinions and not yet an expression of the mind of the Church.

But the chief of these tests, and that for which there is no conceivable substitute, is free discussion. If opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making (as Milton says), discussion is one half the process by which it is made, as the other half is individual examination. Nor can I agree with those who think that there is danger of our shaking the faith of our brethren by the promulgation of our own conclusions from such examination, if they should contradict received opinions. If a man has inquired thoughtfully, earnestly, and in the fear of God, he has inquired also by help of the Spirit of God, and whatever amount of human error there may be mixed up with his conclusions there will certainly be some divine truth also; and the truth is well worth having even at the cost of the errors. The objections and the scoffs of the mere sceptic whose aim is not

to discover the truth, but only to attack prejudices and superstitions, or what he deems such, may be injurious to the faith of those who cannot meet his attacks with equal alertness of intellect: but the earnest Christian seeker after truth will not touch the faith though he must the prejudices and superstitions — for we all have these latter though they are often quite other than what the sceptic supposes, or at least have a foundation of reason which he cannot discern. And though I do not dogmatise as to other times and circumstances, I venture to say that in our own time nothing is doing such real injury to the faith of the Church as this dread of disturbing it. The longer we delay to purge away our prejudices and our superstitions by admitting the genial light of truth the more confirmed do they become, till in the end they have to be broken up by the reckless scepticism which superstition always engenders in the human mind at last, and which when engendered not only destroys its own parent but also — for the time and as far as possible — the truth itself. The Church in England is just

entering on the severest conflict in behalf of the Bible which she has yet known: but though she is daily strengthening the moral position of the Bible, by making us feel increasingly that it is a book of life, she shows little sign of any preparation for its intellectual defence beyond a reliance on the prejudices of her numbers in behalf of their accustomed routine of opinions.

But is not this refusal to investigate prejudices for fear of disturbing faith, in accordance with the parable of the Wheat and the Tares? No: not in our day, and in the actual state of the Church. What the parable means for us is, that neither the Church nor any member of the Church can, without perilling the faith of each and of all, oppose the free growth of the good seed of earnest truth-loving inquiry after Truth. This earnest desire for the truth in all that relates to the Bible, which is showing itself in every direction in spite of all the mistaken though often honest efforts of orthodoxy to repress them, is the good seed which He who is the Truth is sowing in men's heart and making to grow "night and day they know not how:"

and though the tares of doubt and scepticism and low mistaken notions of the plans and the power of God do habitually make their appearance along with the true wheat, still our prescribed and plain duty is to suffer the tares for the sake of the wheat, and to leave to the Lord of the harvest to exterminate the former in His own time and way. God offers us new and farther knowledge of Himself, and of His ways and works, on the mysterious condition that this knowledge shall be accompanied by the appearance of errors which only He himself can separate from the truth, and which He will only separate in His own time without any dictation from us: shall we refuse the offer because of the condition? Our faith is indeed weak and tottering enough: no thoughtful man can look into his own heart, or into what may be plainly discerned of the hearts of his neighbours, and not be aware that under the thin crust of our reticent orthodoxy volcanic fires are slumbering. The men who have gone out from among us openly declaring that honest investigation of received opinions about Chris-

tianity has compelled them to abandon it for pure theism, or else that a still severer logic has shown them that not theism but atheism must be their end if they do not take refuge in the infallible authority of Rome — these are but the representatives of an ever-increasing number who are silently yielding themselves to the prospect of a like fate, because they see no help. And so they fall: so any one of us may fall at any moment, because we will not trust God to strengthen our weak faith in His own way; because we will maintain it by the pride of an unsympathising formal orthodoxy instead of by that frank and free discussion of our doubts and perplexities which would itself be a truer symbol and earnest of Church communion, and of the presence of Him whose presence makes the Church, than either rituals and dogmas, or traditional interpretations of Scripture. There is a schismatic temper which leads us to deny Church fellowship to men who believe in Christ, because they will not deny Him by the admission that the faith which is His gift is worthless if not supplemented with our rituals

and articles: and it is only another manifestation of the same spirit which excludes those who will not, because the God of truth forbids them, worship at the shrines of a traditional bibliolatry. And so we excommunicate each other because we will not admit on either side that the light should be set in the candlestick of plain speaking, and not under the bushel of orthodox formulas.

Our religious life in relation to the Bible—and without the Bible there can be no religious life long—is all sickly and flabby and stunted for want of free discussion. We keep our Body Politic in sobriety no less than vigour of health by a discussion as free as the air we breathe, and which we permit one-sided or unwise or even bad men to use in their way because so only can the wise and good use it effectively for the common weal. We do this and laugh or grieve at the panic-stricken rulers of the Continent who repress with the eyes and hands of an ever-present police each natural and in itself innocuous expression of thought and feeling. But in religion we liberty-prizing English are

very Austrians: in every social meeting, almost in every household, we have some member of a spiritual police which is ever ready to make a man an offender for a word, and to exert an activity in suspecting evil which is only equalled by its incapacity for apprehending the utterance of truth or reason. And it does its work just in the fashion of its civil counterpart: for if some individual who still retains a more than ordinary loyalty to the orthodox creeds should therefore make an effort to defend them by insisting on their applicability to the new wants of men's minds, him it discovers and denounces and casts out of the synagogue; but the greater number of inquirers our police-system merely (yet how effectively we all know) represses into a mental and spiritual condition which too often suggests the question whether a rational reformation is still possible, or whether there only remains for us the alternative of a volcanic torrent of atheism or a Byzantine Christianity in which faith and scepticism will be but contending forms of death and corruption. *Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.*

But let us only allow ourselves the same liberty in theological as we do in political thought, and we shall find that the good and wise will thus acquire a power in maintaining the truth to which they as well as we are now strangers. The Germans reverse our habit, and allow in theology the freedom of discussion which they forbid in politics, and with answerable results. Though no help which they can give us will ever be more than a most inadequate substitute for a home-bred theology—since we want men and minds, and those of the English stamp, and not merely ready-made books—yet it is on the Germans that we are up to this time wholly dependent for our defences of the Bible against our own as well as their sceptics: and indeed it is impossible to read the pages of an Olshausen or a Neander and not be sensible how much they and the Churches to which they have ministered did and must profit by the liberty of unlimited discussion; and how they because they "try all things" are able to "hold fast that which is good" with a healthful masculine grasp of which we have hardly a dream.

Since then there is a Body Spiritual as well as a Body Politic, and since the former, which is the Church, has a life—a divine life—proper to itself and from itself diffused into all its members, it is to the invigoration of this life in accordance with God's laws of life that we must mainly look for the cure of scepticism with its painful perplexities and doubts in the individual member. And then it will be seen that this transient evil has been the opportunity for a permanent progress of good. Nay, he who looks well may perceive even now that the future is full of promise that our faith in Christ shall be—not petrified into Romanism nor evaporated into Pantheism but—established on the ground of positive knowledge as it never has been yet. Our lack of love for truth, and distrust of the power of truth, may prolong the evil of our present miserable division of labour in which one set of men attack the faith in order to eliminate superstitions, and another uphold superstitions lest the faith should go with them; but the time must come when the true relations of the negative and positive methods of inves-

tigation will be recognised by the Church and each member of it who desires to have a reason for the faith that is in him. Then it will be found that we have more than compensation for our lack of that readiness to conceive of miracles which our fathers had because they had not our clear views of the invariable laws of nature. In as far as their ignorance helped them, it was a poor kind of help which from its nature was certain to break down at last: but when the scientific method of investigation which has dispersed that ignorance as to physical sciences shall have been effectively applied to theology;—when our orthodox superstitions and our sceptical theories which are but varieties of the "first notions of the intellect" which Bacon pronounces to be "radically vicious, confused, badly abstracted from things, and needing complete re-examination and revision," shall have been alike subjected to that intellectual discipline which, in theological no less than in physical science, "must purge our sight before we can receive and contemplate, as they are, the lineaments of truth;"—then we shall see clearly that, in the

one case as in the other, reason requires and only prejudice could forbid us to accept conclusions which "stand in open and striking contradiction with those of superficial and vulgar observation, and with what appears to every one until he has weighed and understood the proofs to the contrary, the most positive evidence of the senses." *

* Quoted from Sir J. Herschel's *Astronomy*, as are the words from Bacon, by Mr. Grote, in his chapter on Socrates (*Hist. of Greece*, vol. viii. chap. 68.), which I would recommend to the reader as full of instruction as to the difference between the method of positive, scientific, investigation, and those of metaphysical scepticism and unverified tradition and sentiment.

THE END.

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